



COLCHESTER OPERATIC SOCIETY

SAFEGUARDING POLICY and PROCEDURES
for children and adults at risk

April 2024

Safeguarding Policy

Colchester Operatic Society / Colchester Operatic Society – Second Edition (referred to jointly herein as COS) recognises its duty of care under the Children Act 1989 and 2004, Working together to Safeguard Children 2018 and The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014.

COS recognises that abuse can take many forms, whether it be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect including via online platforms. The Society is committed to practice which protects children and adults at risk from harm. All members of the Society accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop an awareness of the issues which cause harm.

The Society believes that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- We have a duty to safeguard all our members and participants including vulnerable adults and children
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse should be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All members, volunteers and employees of the Society should be clear on how to respond appropriately.

The Society will ensure that

- All children and adults at risk will be treated equally and with respect and dignity.
- The duty of care to children will always be put first.
- A balanced relationship based on mutual trust will be built which empowers all to share in the decision making process.
- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback will be given rather than negative criticism.
- Bullying and/or harassment will not be accepted or condoned.
- All adult members of the Society provide a positive role model for dealing with other people.
- Committee members and appointed personnel put necessary safeguards in place for vulnerable adults and children
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour, including online.
- It will keep up-to-date with health and safety legislation.
- It will keep informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children.
- It will undertake relevant development and training.
- It will hold a register of every child involved with the Society and will retain a contact name and number which will be available in case of emergencies.
- We act on information disclosed to us as necessary and appropriate, especially information that identifies any adults and/or children as vulnerable

The Society has safeguarding procedures which accompany this policy.

COS has a dedicated Safeguarding Lead and a Deputy, who are in charge of ensuring the safeguarding policy and procedures are adhered to.

The Designated COS Safeguarding leads are:

CHARLOTTE BUTCHER

CO2 Chair and Safeguarding Lead (level 3 trained)

Contact details: safeguarding@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk

KATIE CUTMORE

COS Chair and Deputy Safeguarding Lead (level 3 trained)

Contact details: chair@colchesteroperaticsociety.co.uk

Safeguarding Procedures

Responsibilities of the Society

Those on committees and appointed personnel are responsible for the welfare of known vulnerable adults and children, and are expected to be vigilant to any vulnerabilities of people and children they are working with and to put appropriate safeguards for these vulnerabilities in place as necessary.

At the outset of any production involving children the Society will:

- Undertake a risk assessment and monitor risk throughout the production process.
- Identify at the outset the person with designated responsibility for safeguarding.
- Engage in effective recruitment of chaperones and other individuals with responsibility for children, including appropriate vetting (DBS check).
- Ensure that children are supervised at all times.
- Know how to get in touch with the local authority social services, in case it needs to report a concern.

When working with identified vulnerable adults we will also undertake additional risk assessments and monitor risk throughout the production process.

Parents

- COS believes that it is important to maintain a positive partnership between parents and the Society. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the activities of the Society but may still be expected to go through the appropriate vetting procedures.
- All parents will have access to the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures on the website.
- All parents have the responsibility to collect (or arrange collection of) their children after rehearsals or performances. It is NOT the responsibility of the Society to take children home.

Unsupervised Contact

- The Society will attempt to ensure that no adult has unsupervised contact with children.
- If possible there will always be two adults in the room when working with children.
- If unsupervised contact is unavoidable, work will be carried out in a public area or a room with the door open.

Physical Contact

Whilst we encourage everyone to be aware of others' personal space, we recognise that during the production process/working in a theatre environment can mean that people can come into close proximity with each other both on and off stage. If there is ever any time that an individual feels uncomfortable, we encourage them to speak up and if they need any support to make the safeguarding leads aware. In addition, we will ensure that:

- All adults will maintain a safe and appropriate distance from children.
- Adults will only touch children when it is absolutely necessary in relation to the particular activity e.g. providing support when attempting a dance move or demonstrating a move.
- Adults will seek consent prior to any physical contact being made and the purpose of the contact shall be made clear.

Online platforms

- Occasionally a rehearsal may be required to move online, as per a face to face rehearsal there will always be more than one adult present.
- The safeguarding policy also applies to the use of private Facebook or other social media groups if set up by COS and members are also required to follow guidelines set out in our social media policy.

Managing sensitive information

- Permission will be sought from the parents for use of photographic material featuring children for promotional or other purposes.
- The Society's web-based and social media material and activity will be carefully monitored for inappropriate use.

- See our Privacy Policy for the most up to date information regarding how information is used by COS.

Abuse

- COS is aware that there are many forms of abuse including; physical, emotional, online, sexual, and neglect. Those involved in safeguarding have received relevant and up to date training in how to identify these types of abuse.
- COS is also aware of child on child abuse and recognises that abuse does not always occur between an adult and a child.
- If there are concerns about possible abuse the procedure for 'Suspicion of abuse' will be followed.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

- Those responsible for safeguarding have also received training on harmful sexual behaviours and are aware that this has many forms including:
 - inappropriate or unwanted sexualised touching;
 - sexual violence and sexual harassment;
 - upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm;
 - pressurising, forcing, or coercing someone to share nude images (known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery);
 - sharing sexual images of a person without their consent;
 - bullying of a sexual nature online or offline, for example sexual or sexist name-calling.
- This behaviour is not acceptable within COS and appropriate action will be taken following the procedures set out below.

Suspicion of abuse

- If you see or suspect abuse of a child while in the care of COS please make this known to the person with responsibility for safeguarding. If you suspect that the person with responsibility for safeguarding is the source of the problem you should make your concerns known to the Chair of COS.
- Please make a note for your own records of what you witnessed as well as your response, in case there is follow-up in which you are involved.
- REMEMBER IT IS NOT YOUR JOB TO INVESTIGATE. Please pass your concerns on to the designated person immediately.

Disclosure of abuse

If a child makes a disclosure to you:

- Remain calm and in control but do not delay taking action.
- Listen carefully to what has been said. Allow the child to tell you at their own pace and ask questions only for clarification. Do not ask questions that suggest a particular answer.
- Do not promise to keep it a secret. Use the first opportunity you have to share the information with the person with responsibility for safeguarding. Make it clear to the child that you will need to share this information with others. Make it clear that you will only tell the people who need to know and who should be able to help.
- Reassure the child that 'they did the right thing' in telling someone.
- Tell the child what you are going to do next.
- Speak immediately to the person with responsibility for safeguarding. It is that person's responsibility to consider the next steps and liaise with the relevant authorities if needed, usually social services or the police.
- As soon as possible after the disclosing conversation, make a note of what was said, using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names that were involved or mentioned, and who you gave the information to. Make sure you sign and date your record.

Recording

- In all situations, including those in which the cause for concern arises from a disclosure made in

confidence, the details of an allegation or reported incident will be recorded, regardless of whether or not the concerns have been shared with a statutory child protection agency.

- An accurate note shall be made of the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties involved, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to investigate the matter, any further action taken e.g. suspension of an individual, where relevant the reasons why the matter was not referred to a statutory agency, and the name of the persons reporting and to whom it was reported.
- The record will be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

Rights and Confidentiality

- If a complaint is made against a member of the Society, he or she will be made aware of his rights under the Society's constitution and as detailed in our complaints policy and procedures.
- No matter how you may feel about the accusation, both the alleged abuser and the child who is thought to have been abused have the right to confidentiality under The Data Protection Act 2018. Remember also that any possible criminal investigation could be compromised through inappropriate information being released.
- In criminal law the Crown, or other prosecuting authority, has to prove guilt and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.
- Any health and medical information disclosed to the Society will only be shared on a need to know basis and with permission where possible and appropriate, in order to safeguard the individual's health and wellbeing
- Any information about an individual's vulnerability disclosed to us will be treated with confidentiality and only shared with permission or if it is in the interests of safeguarding that individual's immediate safety and wellbeing

Accidents

- To avoid accidents, chaperones and children will be advised of "house rules" regarding health and safety. Adults are asked to read and abide by all appropriate and completed risk assessments.
- Children will be advised of the clothing and footwear appropriate to the work that will be undertaken.
- If a child is injured while in the care of the Society, a designated first-aider will administer first aid and the injury will be recorded in the Society's accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for safeguarding.
- Any accidents that have occurred whilst the young person was in the care of the Society shall be reported to the parents of the child.
- If a child joins the production process with an obvious physical injury a record of this will be made in the accident book. This record will be countersigned by the person with responsibility for safeguarding. This record can be useful if a formal allegation is made later and will also be a record that the child did not sustain the injury while participating in the production.

Disclosure and Barring Service



- If the Society believes it is in its best interest to obtain criminal record disclosures (DBS) for chaperones or other personnel it will inform the individual of the necessary procedures and the level of disclosure required.
- A letter of comfort (also known as a safeguarding check) will be requested from external companies employed/hired by the Society to confirm that appropriate checks including DBS procedures have been carried out.

Chaperones

- Chaperones will be appointed by the Society for the care of children during the production process. By law the chaperone is acting in loco parentis and should exercise the care which a good parent might be reasonably expected to give to a child.
- Potential chaperones will need to complete the relevant paperwork provided by Essex County Council to become a licensed chaperone as well as complete a DBS.
- Chaperones will be made aware of the Society's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Where chaperones are not satisfied with the conditions for the children, they should bring this to the

attention of the Safeguarding Lead(s) as named in the Safeguarding Policy. If changes cannot be made satisfactorily Safeguarding Lead(s) and/or the chaperone(s) should consider not allowing the child to continue.

- If a chaperone considers that a child is unwell or too tired to continue they should speak to a Safeguarding Lead who will make the decision not to allow the child to continue. If the Safeguarding Leads are not available at the time, the chaperone is able to make this decision in their place.
- Under the Dangerous Performances Act, no child of compulsory school age is permitted to do anything which may endanger life or limb.
- During performances, children will be shown how to enter the building and where to sign in.
- Chaperones will be aware of where the children are at all times.
- Chaperones will be allocated to specific dressing rooms/children and also to communal areas.
- Children are not to leave the theatre or performance/rehearsal venue unsupervised by chaperones unless in the company (or with the agreement of parents e.g. between a matinee and evening performance) of their parents.
- Children will be adequately supervised while going to and from the toilets, no adults will be alone in the toilets with a child, the chaperone will make sure there are no adults already in the toilet and then wait outside.
- Children will not be allowed to enter adult dressing rooms.
- Chaperones should be aware of the safety and first aid procedures in the venue and will be proactive to ensure children in their care do not place themselves or others in danger.
- Chaperones should ensure that any accidents are reported and recorded by the Society.
- Chaperones should have written arrangements for the collection of children after performances.
- Children should be signed out when leaving and the chaperone should ensure that they reach the person who is collecting them.
- The chaperone should stay with a child until they have been collected.

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Date: 04/04/2024	Date: 04/04/2024
Katie Cutmore, Chairperson of COS	Charlotte Butcher, Chairperson of CO2